MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT

TO THE

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

OF THE

BARNSTAPLE UNION,

FOR THE YEAR 1921.

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Bear Street,

Barnstaple,

March 25th, 1922.

To the Chairman and Members of the

Barnstaple Rural District Council.

Gentlemen,

I beg to forward you my Annual Report for the year 1921.

In accordance with the instructions received from the Ministry of Health the character of the Report has been somewhat altered compared to those of previous years. For economical and other reasons it has been considerably curtailed and only the more important details submitted to you for consideration.

On the whole, the year compares most favourably with the previous ones. There was some Influenza, but of a mild character. There is nothing special to call for comment with regard to the Sanitary Administration of the District.

I regret to say no further steps have been taken to provide an Isolation Hospital for this portion of North Devon.

Yours faithfully,

J. R. HARPER,

Medical Officer of Health.

1921.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

For the Rural District of Barnstaple.

1. GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area (acres)	129,768.
Population (1921)	18,229.
Number of Inhabited Houses (1921)	
Number of Families or Separate Occupiers (1921)	
Rateable Value	£152,961.
Sum represented by a 1d. Rate ...	£434 16s. 7d.

2. EXTRACTS FROM THE VITAL STATISTICS OF THE YEAR.

		Total.	M.	F.
Births.	Legitimate ..	313	174	139
	Illegitimate ...	16	11	5

Birth Rate (per 1,000) 18·39.

		Total.	M.	F.
Deaths.	... ...	226	116	110

Death Rate (per 1,000) 12·6.

Number of Women dying in, or in consequence of, child birth:

(*a*) from Sepsis, 0. (*b*) from other causes, 1.

Deaths of Infants under 1 year of age, per 1,000 births:

Legitimate	26
Illegitimate	2
Total ...	28

N.B.—Eleven of these deaths were the result of Premature Birth. Infant Mortality Death Rate, 85·1.

Deaths from Measles (all ages)	... ...	0
Whooping Cough (all ages)	... ...	2
Diarrhœa (under 2 years of age)	...	2

3. NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR.

The following table shews the number and age distribution of the cases notified :—

	1 to 5 years.	5 to 15 years.	15 to 25 years.	25 and over	Total.
Scarlet Fever	5	23	2	7	37
Diphtheria	...	3	1	1	5
Encephalitis Lethargica	...	...	1	...	1
Erysipelas	...	2	...	5	7
Puerperal Fever ...	...	...	1	...	1
Pneumonia	...	2	...	5	7
Enteric	...	...	...	4	4
	5	30	5	22	62

It will be observed from the above that there has been no specially noteworthy prevalence of disease.

Enteric Fever. Four cases were notified. They were part of the same outbreak. One of these cases was fatal. The disease originated in a small hamlet in Tawstock parish and were confined to one house. Unfortunately at the time of the commencement of the illness there were visitors from London. Two of these developed the disease on their return home, one of them dying. A relative living in an adjoining parish also contracted the disease from this source and subsequently died from the infection. In the absence of an Isolation Hospital the District Council sanctioned the provision of trained nurses, one of whom unfortunately contracted it and had to be nursed with the other cases. The cause of the outbreak was traced to eating infected food.

Scarlet Fever. The disease was of a mild character and was distributed over several parishes.

Diphtheria. Five cases were notified. There were no deaths.

Encephalitis Lithargica. The single case occurred in a boy who made an excellent recovery.

Puerperal Fever. This was a very mild case and gave rise to no difficulty.

Pneumonia. Probably owing to the very mild type of Influenza only seven cases were notified. Six deaths were notified.

TUBERCULOSIS.

1. Total cases notified, 32.

(*a*) Pulmonary.	Males	...	15
	Females	...	13
	Total	...	28
(*b*) Non-Pulmonary.	Males	...	2
	Females	...	2
	Total	...	4

Of these 4 died during the current year and 7 were admitted to hospital for treatment.

2. Age Periods :—

Under 1 year	...	...	...	0
Between 1 and 5 years		...	...	0
,, 5 and 15	,,	...	...	5
,, 15 and 25	,,	...	...	11
,, 25 and 45	,,	...	...	13
,, 45 and 65	,,	...	...	3
Total		...		32

3. Organs affected :—

Lungs, 27 ; Peritoneum, 1 ; Glandular System, 2 ; Wrist Joint, 1.

4. The disease was distributed amongst the following occupations :—Domestic Servants, 4 ; Labourers, 2 ; Farmers, 2 ; School Teachers, 1 ; Machinists, 2 ; Bakers, 1 ; Ministers, 1 ; House Workers, 10.

5. The cases were notified from the following Parishes :— Swimbridge, 4 ; Combemartin, 4 ; Bishopstawton, 3 ; Braunton, 3 ; Loxhore, 2 ; Westdown, 2 ; Landkey, 2. Single cases were notified from Fremington, Woolacombe, Kentisbury, Berrynarbor, Westleigh, Instow, Newton Tracey, Tawstock, Heanton, Bratton, and Brendon.

DEATHS FROM TUBERCULOSIS.

Total deaths registered as belonging to this district 18. They were divided as follows :—Pulmonary, 15 ; Face, 1 ; Bladder, 1 ; Hip Joint, 1.

The deaths occurred in residents of the following parishes :— Combemartin, 3 ; Fremington, 3 ; Morthoe, 2 ; Westdown, 2 ; Marwood, Westleigh, Georgeham, Parracombe, Bratton, Loxhore, Swimbridge, and Landkey one each.

Occasionally deaths from Tuberculosis have been registered where there has been no previous notification. There are, on the other hand, cases which have been notified as Tubercle and which have died from another disease.

4. CAUSES OF SICKNESS.

The past year may be looked upon, as far as this District is concerned, as a satisfactory one in regard to the health of the area. There has been no serious or extensive outbreak of Disease. The deaths include one from Enteric Fever, two from Whooping Cough, and only three from Influenza. There have been the usual mild outbreaks of sickness amongst the schools, all Chickenpox, Measles and Scabies.

5. SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

Staff.

The two Sanitary Inspectors, Messrs. Ackland and Dean, are experienced officers who have an intimate knowledge of the Districts and its needs.

Their reports are embodied.

Professional Nursing in the Home.

The number of District Nurses employed is gradually increasing—Tawstock, Instow, Bishopstawton, Arlington, are amongst the parishes where they have been introduced. It is unnecessary to refer to their work other than to add that their services are much appreciated and are of undoubted value to the public.

Midwives.

The Local Midwives are under the control and direct supervision of the County Council.

Clinics and Treatment Centres.

There is a Tuberculosis and Veneral Clinic. They are both situated in the Borough of Barnstaple.

Hospitals.

1. Infectious. There is no hospital for Infectious Diseases.
2. Tuberculosis. The Hawley Sanatorium is within the Borough.
3. North Devon Infirmary. This is a hospital of 80 beds available for any Medical or Surgical case other than Infectious. At present it is in need of further financial support from the general public and will be compelled to close some of its wards unless additional help is forthcoming.
4. Barnstaple and North Devon Dispensary. This Institution has a large out-patient department and serves a wide area. It is also in need of support in order to carry on its excellent work.

Bakehouses.

There are fourteen Bakehouses in the district. Sixty-seven inspections have been made of these premises, which were found to be kept in a satisfactory condition. Only one notice was served calling upon the owner to carry out the necessary Lime-washing, as required by Section 99 of the Factory and Workshops Acts, 1901.

Slaughterhouses.

The twenty Licensed Slaughterhouses in the district have been regularly inspected. Two of these are new premises, only licensed this year. Three notices have been served for structural alterations to be carried out. All the premises are kept in a clean and satisfactory condition.

Disinfection.

Where considered necessary after cases of Infectious Disease, the bedding and articles of clothing are sent to the Barnstaple Town Disinfecting Station, where superheated steam is applied. After all cases of notifiable Intectious Disease, fumigation of the house is carried out. Seventy-seven houses have been disinfected in this manner.

Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops.

One hundred and eighty eight Dairymen, Cow-keepers and Purveyors of Milk are registered. The premises where these trades are carried on have been periodically inspected. Nine notices were served requiring alterations to Cowsheds. Milk is exported from the district to Barnstaple Town, Ilfracombe, Bideford, Appledore and Lynton.

Sale of Food and Drugs Acts.

The requirements of these Acts are carried out by the Police.

Closet Accommodation.

Six Closets of the conservancy system have been converted into Water Closets. In the scattered Rural Parishes the old style of Earth Closet still remains.

HOUSING.

Number of New Houses erected during the year :—

(*a*) Total 29

(*b*) As part of a municipal housing scheme ... Nil

1. Unfit Dwelling Houses.

Inspection—(1). Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts) 582

(2). Number of dwelling-houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910 140

(3). Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation ... ... Nil

(4). Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-heading) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation 107

2. Remedy of Defects without Service of Formal Notices. Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers 81

3. Action under Statutory Powers.

A. Proceedings under Section 28 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c., Act, 1919.

(1). Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs ...

(2). Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit 1

(*a*) by owners 1

(*b*) by Local Authority ... ... Nil

(3). Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close ... Nil

B. Proceedings under Public Health Acts.

(1). Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied 144

(2). Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied ... ...

(*a*) by owners 107

(*b*) by Local Authority in default of owners ... Nil

C. Proceedings under Sections 17 and 18 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c., Act, 1909.

(1). Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders ... ... Nil

(2). Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made ... ... Nil

(3). Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the dwelling-houses having been rendered fit ... ... Nil

(4). Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made ... ... Nil

(5). Number of dwelling-houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders ... ... Nil

LABORATORY WORK.

The Public Health Department of the Devon County Council have made provision for any Bacteriological Examinations that may be necessary, and advantage is fully taken of this by the Medical men of the area.

LOCAL ACTS OR GENERAL ADOPTIVE ACTS.

(*a*) Urban powers are in force in regard to the following parishes :—

Morthoe. For the removal of house refuse, the watering and cleansing of the streets, and bye-laws with regard to bathing.

Instow. For removal of house refuse.

Braunton. For the removal of house refuse, cleansing and watering of the streets.

Combemartin. For the cleansing and watering of the streets and for the removal of house refuse.

Countisbury. For the removal of house refuse.

(*b*) Bye laws for the better snpervision of slaughterhouses apply to the following parishes :—Berrynarbor, Bishopstawton. Bratton Fleming, Braunton, Combemartin, Countisbury, Fremington, Georgeham, Instow, Landkey, Morthoe, Marwood, Parracombe, Swimbridge, and Tawstock.

(*c*) The Dairies, Cowsheads and Milk Shops Order, 1885, refers to the entire district.

(*d*) Part 3 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1890.

(*e*) Part 4 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907.

J. R. HARPER.